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Mrs Alison Hartley and Mrs Linsley
Acting Co-Headteachers
Green Lane Church of England Controlled Primary School
Green Lane
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Dear Mrs Hartley and Mrs Linsley

Short inspection of Green Lane Church of England Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since Green Lane Church of England Primary School was judged to be good in May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Despite significant staffing turbulence over the past year, leaders have remained focused. They are determined to sustain good and improving outcomes for pupils across the school. Pupils enjoy their lessons and an overwhelming majority of parents said that they would recommend Green Lane Primary School to others. Parents were keen to tell me that staff and leaders are friendly, supportive and approachable. Parents explain that staff provide a high quality of education for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. One or two parents expressed concerns that the school had not yet appointed a substantive headteacher but the majority were reassured that the staff team seemed more stable this term.

As acting headteachers, you both promote a calm and purposeful atmosphere in school. Staff are proud to work at Green Lane; their morale is high and they welcome support from senior leaders. Together with a strong and capable team of governors, you both monitor the work of your staff closely. Your observations, reports and feedback show that you know the school well. You share a clear picture of the school's strengths and understand where further improvements would be beneficial. You work together to analyse pupils' progress carefully and address any of your concerns quickly. As a result, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and attain consistently high standards.

Over the past three years, you have both improved teaching and learning in mathematics. Pupils have excellent attitudes towards mathematics and most say it is their favourite subject. Your subject leader for mathematics has managed improvements well so pupils' achievement continues to be at least average and is often above national expectations. For example, in the past three years eight out of 10 pupils met the expected standard for mathematics in national curriculum tests. Most-able pupils have also achieved well in mathematics recently with four out of 10 pupils working at the higher levels of the national curriculum.

As requested in your previous inspection report, you have introduced new guidance for staff in mathematics. Your procedures ensure that staff follow the agreed order in which calculations should be taught so that pupils develop their understanding better. Teachers plan lessons effectively now and they build up their pupils' mathematical skills gradually and securely over time. Previously, teachers set work that was either too easy or too hard for their pupils in mathematics and this needed improvement. You have made sure that most staff now provide an appropriate level of challenge to match the different needs and abilities of their pupils. Occasionally, in some classes, pupils do not have enough time to apply their problem-solving skills and so miss the opportunity to grapple with concepts and use deeper levels of thinking. As a result, the pace of progress slows in one or two classes and pupils do not achieve the very highest of standards possible. Governors are aware that although progress in mathematics is good, this is still a subject where outcomes could be even higher.

Safeguarding is effective.

As co-headteachers, you both ensure that all of your staff promote a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. As designated safeguarding leaders, you train staff well and make sure that you meet all the necessary safeguarding requirements. You provide new staff with induction training in child protection and safeguarding so that they are aware of your expectations. Governors take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously and often attend training with staff so everyone shares the same vision for safeguarding across the school. Governors with responsibility for safe recruitment ask candidates about safeguarding during interviews and undertake all the required vetting procedures in full. You have worked together recently to improve record-keeping and use your systems meticulously to evidence and follow up any of your concerns. You work closely with external agencies so that vulnerable families receive the support they need to keep their children as safe as possible. You provide detailed information promptly to other agencies when they make referrals and follow appropriate procedures in full. Governors have appointed a dedicated member of staff to provide additional support for any pupils who experience emotional or well-being difficulties. Pupils welcome this additional help and know that staff will support them with any of their worries.

Inspection findings

- All children, including boys and the most able, make a good start in the Reception class. Parents explain that children settle quickly and that staff plan activities effectively to meet their different needs. Children in the early years say they enjoy school, especially reading books and listening to stories. Staff ensure that children make good progress. They provide an exciting range of activities to engage children with learning both inside and outdoors. While staff maintain a strong focus upon improving children's basic skills, they also offer many activities that help children to understand the world and to use expressive arts and design. Staff create detailed journals of each child's progress across the whole curriculum, frequently sharing their records with parents to keep them involved in their children's learning. Your early years leader ensures that phonics and mathematics teaching are effective and has developed innovative activities to improve learning in these subjects. The most able children in the Reception class move up to work with older pupils once they have mastered the basics in phonics. All of your early years staff assess children carefully to make sure that the next steps in children's learning are challenging but achievable. You prepare early years children well for their move into Year 1. In 2017, more than four out of every five children reached a good level of development, which was above the national average.
- Last year, a lower-than-average proportion of pupils met the required standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check. A number of pupils were new to your school during Year 1, having arrived from other schools in the local area, and had not attended your Reception class. Some of this group had started at your school later in the year, with a lower starting point than other pupils. As acting co-headteachers, you analysed the results from the phonics screening check carefully and used the findings to design a new, improved phonics programme. For example, you are now teaching pupils more about how to identify real words from nonsense words. The changes that both of you have made are already having a positive impact upon pupils' learning in key stage 1 phonics.
- Inspection activities during my visit included listening to pupils read. Year 1 pupils showed that they have a good and improving knowledge of how to use phonics to tackle unfamiliar words. They read with confidence and clearly enjoy reading. Most-able pupils in Year 1 make particularly swift progress with their reading skills and use phonics very effectively to work out unusual words. They read with fluency and staff have taught them how to use their intonation and expression with confidence. Your staff keep clear records to show the development of pupils' reading skills and encourage parents to read at home regularly with their children. Your team make sure that pupils' reading books match their ability so that they provide just the right amount of challenge for each pupil.
- Pupils' achievement at the end of key stage 1 and 2 has remained high since the previous inspection. I was interested to find out if progress was equally as good for all groups of pupils across the school. I focused upon the progress made by boys, in particular. I also looked at the rates of progress made by those pupils who receive pupil premium funding. Your in-depth records showed that both of

these groups make progress in line with their peers in reading, writing and mathematics.

- In many classes last year, those pupils supported by pupil premium funding made accelerated progress and this helped them to catch up to their peers. Nine out of 10 pupils who were eligible for pupil premium funding made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics last year. More than half of this group made progress that was better than expected.
- Your tracking data shows that boys and girls make similar rates of progress in each subject, with no inequality seen in the outcomes achieved. Work in pupils' mathematics books showed that both boys and girls make similar progress over time. Pupils' English books showed similarly high standards of work. Your tracking information matched the progress seen in pupils' books, showing that staff assess pupils' skills accurately. While your tracking data in reading, writing and mathematics is very effective, you recognise that assessments in the foundation subjects of the national curriculum are not as robust. For example, your staff do not assess and record pupils' progress in geography and history as thoroughly as they do in other subjects. It is therefore difficult for your middle leaders to check how well your pupils are doing in these subjects.
- Your staff liaise well with parents so that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their different starting points. Teachers and support staff are patient if pupils do not understand explanations straight away and intervene sensitively to help pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- During the inspection, I was keen to check whether pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are still as strong as they were at the previous inspection. I spoke to groups of pupils formally and around school to find out their views. Pupils feel very safe in school and know who to turn to if they ever need help. They demonstrated a good understanding of how to keep safe in school and beyond the school gates. For example, they could recall procedures for fire drills and understood how to stay safe around bonfires and fireworks. Older pupils helped younger children readily in the playground, without needing adults to guide them. Younger pupils welcomed the support and guidance from older pupils and said that key stage 2 pupils gave them a good role model to copy. Pupils agreed that behaviour was generally very good in school and that bullying was only a rare occurrence. They explained that if anyone did misbehave or bully others, then staff would step in and 'sort it out'. Pupils commented, 'Our teachers are really good at solving problems if they ever happen but problems don't happen much. We don't have many naughty people here.'
- Governors recently completed a review of governance and appointed new members to help them meet their statutory requirements in full. They are aware that some aspects of the school's website require updating and are already in the process of making the changes needed. Governors keep a close eye on the progress made by pupils who receive additional funding. They receive regular reports from senior leaders and monitor outcomes to check that any additional support provides good value for money. They look at evidence in pupils' books and analyse data effectively to challenge the school to improve continuously.

Governors manage performance related pay with greater rigour now and request evidence from staff before agreeing to any pay rise.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- recent improvements in mathematics are embedded so pupils in every class have enough time to apply their problem-solving skills, grapple with concepts and use deeper levels of thinking
- outcomes are improved for pupils in geography and history by helping subject leaders to monitor progress and track information effectively in these subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Durham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Durham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sylvia Humble
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with both of you and other members of the senior leadership team. I also held a meeting with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I listened to six pupils read and talked to them about school. I met formally with a group of pupils that included a representative from each year group in school. I observed pupils during playtime and lunchtime and spoke to them informally about their views on the school. I spoke to representatives from the local authority and the Diocese of Durham to find out more information about your school. I visited classrooms in key stage 1 and 2 to carry out joint observations with both you and your joint acting headteacher. We specifically looked at the impact of your work to improve teaching and learning in mathematics during classroom visits. I looked at pupils' work in their mathematics and English books and scrutinised journals that belonged to children from the Reception class. I reviewed a range of documents including those linked to safeguarding, behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning across school. I discussed information about pupils' progress, attendance and achievements with both of you and other senior leaders. I considered the views of the 31 parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and spoke to parents in the school grounds when they dropped off their children. I also took in to account seven responses to the staff questionnaire.